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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 000326

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PARM](#) [KNNP](#) [ENRG](#) [PK](#) [IN](#) [NSC](#)  
SUBJECT: NUCLEAR SECURITY CENTER OF EXCELLENCE DISCUSSIONS  
IN MUMBAI

REF: A. NEW DELHI 02398  
[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 00205

Classified By: POL Minister Counselor Uzra Zeya for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

[1](#)1. C) SUMMARY: U.S. and Indian interagency delegations met on the margins of the Civil Nuclear Energy Working Group (CNEWG) meeting in Mumbai Feb 3-4 to discuss collaboration on a Nuclear Security Center of Excellence (COE). Continuing discussions on proposals that had been tabled previously, the Indians outlined an Indian Center that contained elements of both proposals. Under the Indian proposal, U.S. involvement in the center would be to promote best practices for regulatory and physical security of existing nuclear processes and materials. India's proposal focused on setting up a research and development center dedicated to the world-wide deployment of technologies based on a purportedly proliferation-resistant thorium fuel cycle. It also contained some elements related to the physical security of facilities. The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) chair noted that the creation of their center was an Indian initiative that would not depend on U.S. involvement, underscoring that they envisioned the establishment of a sustainable institution rather than a medium-term cooperative project. DAE welcomed U.S. and IAEA participation on an international advisory panel, but did not further elaborate on a U.S. role. Though the Indian proposal did not fully meet the U.S. vision for a COE, it demonstrated initiative and a welcome openness to serious engagement with the United States on cooperative nuclear security training and research programs. Both delegations agreed to look for ways to work together on elements common to both proposals. END SUMMARY.

Two Visions for a Center of Excellence  
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[1](#)2. (C) An interagency delegation, led by the National Security Council, met on the margins of the Civil Nuclear Working Group (CNWG) in Mumbai February 4 to discuss possibilities for collaboration on a U.S.-India Center of Excellence for Nuclear Security (COE). The Indian delegation, led by Dr. Ravi Grover of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), also included Amandeep Singh Gill, Director of the Ministry of External Affairs' Disarmament and International Security Affairs Division. The U.S. proposal envisioned a focus on best practices and training on physical security, targeting an international audience of operators, regulators, security management, inspectors and response force personnel. The aim was to announce the intention to collaborate on such a center with the Indian Government at the Nuclear Security Summit April 10-11 in Washington. The Indian initiative, titled "Center of Excellence for Worldwide Deployment of Nuclear Energy," represented a different vision

emphasizing instead the promotion of purportedly proliferation-resistant thorium fuel cycles with a strong emphasis on research and development.

#### India's Vision: Worldwide Deployment Center

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13. (C) The Worldwide Deployment Center described by DAE would comprise four schools. The main school would be dedicated to the design and analysis of nuclear energy systems to promote the worldwide deployment of thorium-based reactors which they claimed would be intrinsically proliferation resistant. The focus on proliferation-proof thorium fuel plays to India's long-term leadership aspiration regarding thorium. When questioned on the matter, however, Dr. Grover accepted the center could consider "other proposed systems." The remaining three schools would have a component base for training and research on nuclear security including simulation, physical security, radiation measurement, protection devices, and radiation technology applications. These issues have some overlap with the topic areas of the proposed U.S. COE. Discussion of engagement on these issues was a new and welcome development, a change from India's prior resistance to discussing collaboration on training and research.

14. (C) Grover emphasized that sustainability was the "key" to the Worldwide Deployment Center. He underscored the priority DAE placed on creating a center that could attract top-quality researchers who would not see a posting to the center as a dead-end job. DAE had a vision of a composite

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center that could be a fertile think-tank about more than just nuclear security. Grover underscored that the Deployment Center would be an Indian government body, staffed by the DAE, whose primary focus was research and development. The Center would include visiting scientists, scholars and an international advisory board, including U.S. and IAEA representatives, to consult on programs and training curricula. However, how this international participation would work in practice was left unclear in the discussion. Cooperation Apart from Thorium

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15. (C) The U.S. delegation stressed that the United States did not support thorium research, nor could U.S. involvement be construed as an endorsement of the commercial promotion of thorium-based reactors. In response, Grover implied that the DAE already had the funding it needed to establish such a center and was in the process of scouting land near Delhi on which to locate the center. In a later off-line discussion, DISA Director Gill suggested that the money for the Deployment Center was not in place, leaving a door open for possible collaboration. Grover seemed open to collaboration on training conducted at the center even if the United States was not involved in the main thorium component of the center. The U.S. delegation promised to develop U.S. views on the thorium focus of the center, although it was not part of the original COE vision and the commercial deployment and promotion aspects of the program could likely not be endorsed by the United States.

16. (C) The U.S. delegation representative from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission noted that the Indian proposal made no mention of the role of regulation in nuclear security. Grover made clear that Indian regulators had not been consulted about the COE, but offered to inquire whether regulatory issues might be included in the curriculum. The DAE planned to announce the construction of the center at the Nuclear Security Summit (NSS) in April and asked that the U.S. welcome the announcement. In a sidebar discussion U.S. delegation representatives underscored that in addition to potential concerns about the thorium component of the proposal, the project title "Worldwide Deployment" could be problematic in the context of the Nuclear Security Summit.

Meeting with Rao

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17. (C) In subsequent meetings on the sidelines of the Sous-Sherpa Summit in the Hague February 12-13, the President's Nuclear Security Summit Sherpa Gary Samore held a bilateral meeting with Foreign Secretary Rao in which the Indians continued their productive and helpful partnership on these issues. In their discussion, FS Rao helpfully referred to the proposed center as a "National Nuclear Center" rather than a "Worldwide Deployment" center. Recognizing that it would be India's center, the U.S. delegation again raised its concern about the research and development piece of the center being too narrowly focused on thorium, and suggested that India would attract a larger and potentially higher caliber of scientists it were more expansive. Rao underscored that India would like to announce the Center during the Summit and then work with the United States on details for the collaboration in advance of President Obama's visit to India. In a separate conversation at the Hague, DISA Director Gill, stated that India would provide the U.S. with an updated proposal based on these discussions.

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